

"We stand at a turning point. We can continue to ignore and abuse our oceans, or we can make a serious effort to change our behavior and so ensure that our great-grandchildren and their children will be able to benefit from the ocean as much as we have. Our oceans are at our mercy.

"I join Admiral Watkins and Mr. Panetta in recognizing the important progress made last year, especially the passage of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act. However, this progress is still not at the level it needs to be in order to address the crisis on our hands. California and other regional governments continue to make far greater advances in improving and preserving the health of our ocean and coastal ecosystems than the Administration can seem to manage at the federal level. This must change.

"We've taken a first step already this year. On the first day of session, I re-introduced a major oceans governance reform package as H.R. 21 which embodies the highest priority recommendations of Admiral Watkins and Mr. Panetta's commissions. This bill, called Oceans-21, would take critical steps like creating a regional oceans governance framework, codify the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and establishing an Oceans Trust Fund. I look forward to working with Chairman Rahall to move this legislation and to working within the Appropriations Committee to ensure adequate funding for oceans laws already on the books."

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, a collaborative effort of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and Pew Oceans Commission led by former commission chairs, Admiral James D. Watkins and the Honorable Leon E. Panetta, gave the nation a C- grade on ocean policy reform. They rated international leadership on oceans an D-, research, science and education efforts a D+ and new funding for ocean policy and programs an F.

For more information on the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative's U.S. Ocean Policy Report Card, visit www.jointoceancommission.org .